



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT FOR HB 1090 -

Food Supplement Benefits - Students - Eligibility

House Appropriations Committee

February 18th, 2025

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Brielle Pinzini. I am the Anti-Hunger Program Assistant for Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs. On behalf of Maryland Hunger Solutions, I offer our strong support of **HB1090**, which would require the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to add an optional question to the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) application, centered on acknowledging the food security status of students applying for state scholarships. MDCAPS is MHEC's comprehensive financial aid system that allows for processing of state scholarship and need-based grants available for eligible Maryland residents.

For over ten years, Maryland Hunger Solutions has provided application assistance to any Marylander trying to apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We provide this service both in-person and over-the-phone, where our toll-free hotline receives 300-400 calls per month from Marylanders seeking assistance. In addition, Maryland Hunger Solutions leads a coalition of over 30 colleges and universities around the state of Maryland fighting food insecurity on campus, focused on strengthening access to SNAP and emergency food resources for students, staff, and surrounding community members.

The impact of this legislation would be in providing campuses the potential to utilize the information collected to better support the food security needs of Maryland students, specifically by establishing a consistent measurement of food insufficiency for students applying for state aid.

College students have one of the most difficult experiences connecting to support programs, partially because it is extremely difficult to capture comprehensive data for such a multifaceted population. Every college/university campus is different, and each student comes from a unique background. Simplifying a measurement for food insecurity on the MDCAPS application with the addition of the optional question proposed, would allow the state to acknowledge and address food insecurity on college campuses as a major public health concern. Therefore, we find it essential that this question remains optional for the student completing the MDCAPS



application, due to the delicate nature of experiencing food insecurity.

Finally, we are supportive of the Delegate's sponsor amendment to remove the section focused on students participating in Federal Work Study from the proposed language. We commend the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) for their work on updating their internal policy, making that section no longer necessary. Enacting this legislation shows a commitment from the state that support for Maryland's college students has the greatest potential return on investment for our community.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for HB 1090. Thank you for your time.